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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001042

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: KINSHASA TENSE AS JUNE 30 APPROACHES

Classified By: DCM TDougherty for reasons 1.4 b/d.

1. (SBU) Summary: Though tensions are rising in Kinshasa and elsewhere in the country in anticipation of June 30, the security situation remains generally calm. Some opposition leaders, most particularly UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi, continue to call for the end of the transitional government on June 30, but there has been no noticeable groundswell of popular support. That said, the rumor mill is on full throttle, police presence has markedly increased, and residents are keeping a close eye on developments. End summary.

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Rumor Mill Working Overtime  
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2. (SBU) The past month has been marked by constant rumors, all of which have turned out to be unsubstantiated. There have been reports of shipments of machetes being delivered from Brazzaville and elsewhere, of several thousands of Angolans (and/or other foreign) soldiers on the streets, of collusion by foreign governments, and of an impending declaration of martial law. Beginning more than a week ago, rumors of curfews were widely circulated to the point where on June 15 the Governor of Kinshasa had to have a message broadcast on television and radio which in essence said: "Yes, we have no curfew."

3. (C) Expatriates have helped fan rumors. Great importance was attributed to the difficulty in getting airline reservations to Europe during the second half of June; while true, the end of the school year always results in families heading to Europe and elsewhere for summer vacations, though this year's exodus is clearly larger than normal. Numerous international and multinational companies began advising their Kinshasa offices as early as May to have family members and non-essential personnel out of the country by mid-June. At least one U.N. agency in Kinshasa ominously advised its employees to stockpile food, stay off the streets, and prepare to evacuate. All of this contributed to what both Congolese and international residents refer to as the "June 30 psychosis."

4. (C) There is justified fear that significant violence could erupt elsewhere, particularly in the UDPS stronghold of the Kasais. Recent violence in Mbuji Mayi, for example, is seen by many as a harbinger of worse things to come. Though geographically distant from Kinshasa, televised images of fighting from Mbuji Mayi or Kanaga, for example, could easily incite UDPS supporters in the capital to take to the streets. Events in the Kasais, however, do not automatically carry the same political consequences as those in Kinshasa.

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Increased Police and Military Presence  
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5. (SBU) Police units have been deployed throughout the city, especially during the night, and their presence has been noted by Kinshasa residents. Likewise, there has been a proliferation of military checkpoints. There has been a decrease in activity on the streets at night due to the police and military presence (and shakedowns of citizens by soldiers), increased crime in the city over the past months, and the end of the school year.

6. (C) The Minister of Interior advised political counselor that units were being deployed throughout Kinshasa with the express purpose of ensuring that groups of ten or more not being allowed to congregate. He added that foreigners were not being targeted, but implied that it would be a good idea to stay close to home.

7. (C) The presence of the police is potentially a mixed blessing. While they can play a constructive role in maintaining order, if they are not paid in the coming days they could be a destabilizing force. Senior government officials have told us that police will be paid, with June 25 being the date most frequently mentioned. If adequate payments are not made, however, the situation could become explosive.

18. (C) Reports are re-surfacing that the military intends to have a major "show of force" before June 30. This would involve troops marching in formation in Kinshasa, with the possibility of boats on the Congo River and helicopters also being deployed. We, along with other Western missions, have told ministers and other senior officials that such a plan is ill-advised. The possibility of an incident rapidly spinning out of control is very real, particularly since the Congolese military has a dismal track record regarding crowd control.

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Some Encouraging Signs  
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19. (SBU) Parliament approved the extension of the transition on June 17 (without any resulting violent reactions), an electoral calendar has been promulgated, and voter registration began successfully in Kinshasa on June 20. These developments have been widely publicized, and seem to be generally well understood by residents of the capital. In Catholic and Protestant churches on June 19, priests and ministers advised their congregations to stay peaceful. A statement from the Catholic Bishops' Conference on June 22, while containing some mixed messages, called on the Congolese to reject violence. ROC President Sassou flew from Brazzaville to Kinshasa today, and we understand he is seeking to speak with Tshisekedi as part of his program. Significantly, markets and stores are operating normally and people are going about their daily business as usual.

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Comment  
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110. (C) If police and soldiers are paid this weekend, the "June 30 psychosis" may anti-climatically turn out to be the Congolese equivalent of the "Year 2000" scare. If they are not paid, however, trouble can be expected. One way or the other, there are spoilers who have every intention of creating mayhem centered on June 30. Barring a breakdown in military and police discipline, and barring incidents that spin quickly out of control, the chances of neutralizing such spoilers are reasonably good. End comment.  
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